



WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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TESTIMONY OF WINE AND SPIRITS WHOLESALERS OF CONNECTICUT

In Support of:

Proposed Bill 6198 AN ACT PROHIBITING OPEN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTAINERS IN MOTOR VEHICLES.

The members of the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut ("WSWC") support Proposed Bill 6198s which will make unlawful, the possession of an open container of beverage alcohol in the passenger compartment of a motor. The proposed bills will:

- assist in the enforcement of the state's DWI laws,
- emphasize the importance of not driving while intoxicated;
- bring the state in to further compliance with the requirements Federal Highway Transportation Act (thus preventing the redirection of Federal Highway Transportation Funds); and
- provide four million dollars of funding for safety enforcement and hazard elimination programs.

The members of the WSWC enthusiastically support these goals and objectives.

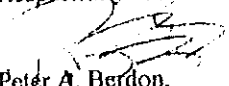
In preparing language for Proposed Bill 6198 the WSWC encourages the committee to follow language from past sessions which provided a reasonable definition of the passenger compartment so that those who drive mini-vans, "SUVs" or similar vehicles which do not have a "trunk" area will not be in violation of the law. This is particularly important for the licensed salesmen employed by members of the WSWC who often transport open samples of beverage alcohol to licensed retailers. It is also, important to provide, as language in past session proposals did, for the exception for motor vehicles for hire which would allow for "open containers" in limousines and other such motor vehicles.

The members of the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of Connecticut ("WSWC") are a key link in the 3-Tier System which controls the distribution of beverage alcohol in this country. They purchase beverage alcohol from suppliers and manufacturers and then market and sell those products to licensed retailers – restaurants and package stores. The members of the WSWC:

- are licensed and regulated by the state of Connecticut and the federal government;
- are responsible to insure that the wines and spirits brought in to the state by manufacturers and importers are sold and distributed only to licensed retailers (package stores and restaurant);
- collect and remit to the in excess of \$35 million dollars in state excise taxes;
- assist the Department of Revenue Services in the collection of Sales and Use Taxes, in excess of \$114 Million Dollars annually;
- provide in excess of 1,400 direct jobs to Connecticut residents; and
- contribute in excess of \$150 million dollars in direct and in direct benefits to the state's economy.

The members of the WSWC are committed to ensuring that the best possible safeguards to prevent the sale of beverage alcohol to minors are in place and adults of legal drinking age consume beverage alcohol responsibly, while at the same time providing an efficient method of distribution which provides access to a wide variety of quality wine and spirits from all over the world.

Respectfully submitted,


Peter A. Berdon,
Executive Director/General Counsel